Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church.

156 Fifth Avenue. *New York City.*

Woman's Synodical Committees OF Home Missions.

Perhaps the wide scope of the Woman's Synodical Committees of Home Missions may be more clearly understood if we trace briefly their evolution. And first, it may be well to consider the

HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS.

To do this let us turn our thoughts backward a quarter of a century to the old conception of woman's part in home missions. Some among us recall the day when our year's offering to home missions was concentrated upon the annual home missionary box, prepared for some devoted worker upon that ever westward-moving frontier line. When once the box was filled and on its way we folded our hands contentedly, feeling that our whole work for home missions was finished for the entire year.

Our eyes were "holden" in those early days; we did not see the superstitious heathenism abounding in our country's waste, neglected places, or the cloud of Mormonism arising, at first scarcely larger than a man's hand, and so were content. But God's ways are not our ways. Through strange providences, marvelous ways, God led His handmaids out into a wider work.

Early in 1866 the devoted Christian wife of an army

officer left her home in Central New York to join her husband at the military post at Santa Fé, New Mexico. Quickly her eyes were opened, her ears unstopped to the pitiful needs of the women and children of the Spanish-speaking people and the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest. At once she sent back to the dear mother in the old home the plea for help for these people. That mother, as mothers will, at once responded to the daughter's appeal. She went out among her friends; the letter was read and re-read many times; the story told and told again, and a little company of praying women, in August of 1877, banded themselves together in the Master's name at Auburn, N. Y., for mission school work in Arizona and New Mexico. A wide field and a handful, comparatively, of Christian women to occupy it.

Early in the seventies God led one of his young servants from Illinois over plains and mountains into Utah in search of health. While awaiting renewed strength he at once set about his Master's business; and while intent upon this found the only real solution of the Mormon problem, or one of its strongest factors, in Christian education for the Mormon children and youth.

The need of more aggressive work among the nation's "wards" was being felt by Christian philanthropists, as the strong westward tide of immigration surged here and there, sweeping the red men on before it to the unoccupied plains and among the distant mountain ranges, with ever narrowing limits. "The children of these wards *must* be cared for in a more practical way, and quickly," was the substance of the many pleas of Christian men and women, and the mission industrial school was being slowly evolved.

Though undertaken later, the leadings of God's hand are just as plainly shown in the *unplanned* beginnings

of the work among a "people passed by" in the very heart of our own country—that class of mountain people so largely of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian ancestry. In the spring of 1879 two consecrated women went South as Bible readers among the Freedmen. The Lord had other work for them, and in an old log cabin upon a piece of ground that fifteen years before an aged servant of God had set apart and dedicated to Christian education, the first mission school among these poor white people was opened. The Woman's Board of Home Missions was not then organized, but later this school came to this body, a sacred trust transferred by the Ladies' Board of Missions of New York.

Other portions of this wide field were also opening, especially in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee When the founder of the "Five Points Missions" of New York sought renewed strength in that region, little did he foresee the purposes of God in permitting him to tarry there "awhile" for rest. Soon his sympathy was aroused in behalf of the "Mountaineers," and ere long he found rest by opening a small school for the poor untaught girls in the mountains about Asheville. As the field unfolded in its wideness to his astonished vision, he felt called of God to this new work; as its urgency and magnitude became more apparent he was constrained to call for help.

Thus from varied sources and peculiar classes, through agencies God-given, came to the church a knowledge of the sin, ignorance, aye, heathenism, abounding in large sections of this Christian land.

Not planned by any body of men or company of women, but blessed of God, the work was started in these out-of-the-way places. These small beginnings here and there, like the disturbed waters of a placid lake once set in motion, sent out their influences in ever widening circles, till the Church was stirred to

great activity, and the cause of these peoples called "exceptional"—with us but not of us—was earnestly advocated.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WOMAN'S BOARD.

Two overtures were sent on by the Presbyterian women of Iowa to our General Assembly, one in 1873, the other in 1875.

The Presbyteries of Colorado and Utah also sent on similar overtures at different times, and the editor of the Rocky Mountain Presbyterian, Dr. Sheldon Jackson, did much to keep this urgent work before the people.

Add to this two facts, first—the Board of Home Missions' decision regarding its inability to divert funds from the support of its ministers to the maintenance of schools and the salaries of teachers; second—the strong objection of some of the Women's Boards of Foreign Missions against including other than foreign missions in their organization, and the prime factors in this new departure are made plain, as well as the reasons why Christian women were called into active co-operation with our Board of Home Missions upon new lines of work under new conditions.

Careful investigation shed increasing light upon the benighted condition of the exceptional classes and also showed the happy results of the mission school work in these small beginnings, and clearly demonstrated its peculiar ability to touch the very heart of this problem of Christian civilization.

All this led to the action of the General Assembly of 1875 recommending "the organization of a Woman's Home Missionary Society, with Auxiliary Societies under the advice and counsel of the Board of Home Missions" (p. 489, Minutes General Assembly).

In 1876 the General Assembly took stronger action, setting the wheels within wheels in motion as follows:—"We suggest to the Assembly to urge and impress

this good work upon the women of all our churches, to recommend thorough organization. It is further suggested to the synods to appoint annually a committee in each synod." (p. 31).

In 1877 the General Assembly fully rounded out the plan and the complete machinery, thoroughly Presbyterian, was authoritatively before the women of our church.

Many synods loyally responded to these recommendations, and in December of 1878 members of these Synodical Committees met at the Bible House in New York, duly organized the Woman's Executive Committee (now Board) of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, and elected officers, with headquarters in New York with our Board of Home Missions.

SYNODICAL COMMITTEES.

The Synodical Committees appointed by the various synods entered with more or less energy and loyalty upon the work assigned them. By slow but sure degrees committee after committee met and duly organized for more efficient work, by the adoption of constitutions and the election of officers.

The Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions carefully prepared constitutions for synodical, presbyterial and local use, to serve as guides in this work of thorough organization, but did not arbitrarily present them for adoption.

In these constitutions, however, the place and power of each member of a Synodical Committee as regards the local, presbyterial and synodical relation, and the various announcements and articles from time to time in the HOME MISSION MONTHLY, as well as the regular notices of the annual meetings, calling "all members of the Synodical Committees" to attend, have emphasized constantly and clearly the wide-reaching power of these committees.

To make this as plain and unmistakable as possible, let us trace this relationship or power:

First.—This body of women duly appointed by the synods constitutes *the body* of which the Woman's Board is the *head*, and is called upon each year to convene for the election of officers of the Woman's Board, listen to the reports of the year's work just closed, and attend to such other business as may be brought before it.

Each member of the Synodical Committee has a right to attend the regular monthly meetings of the Woman's Board at 156 Fifth Avenue, N.Y., and to vote upon any matters under consideration.

Second.—The members of a Synodical Committee appointed by its synod constitute a body which should and does adopt a synodical constitution and elect annually its own officers.

This committee may alone constitute the synodical society, or it may include presbyterial and local societies. At the present time nearly all synodical societies are composed of the members of the Synodical Committees and officers of presbyterial societies. Some synodical constitutions include local societies and provide for both local and presbyterial representation at the annual meetings.

Presbyterial officers should form part of the synodical society, and members of Synodical Committees duly appointed by synods *must* do so.

This synodical society is the connecting link between the Woman's Board and the presbyterial societies in its synod, and should be the medium of communication between the two. The local or auxiliary societies form the presbyterial society and should not be required to send delegates to the synodical society, thereby entailing needless expense; but any members of auxiliary or local societies who desire to attend at their own expense

as visitors, should be, and are, most cordially welcomed.

Third.—The members of the Synodical Committee in any presbytery may or may not be elected to office in the presbyterial society, but they *must* form part of the *Executive Committee of the Presbyterial Society*, perform faithfully the duties of such members, and attend as far as possible every meeting of the Executive Committee called by the presbyterial president.

Fourth.—The members of Synodical Committees should hold themselves in all loyalty, ready to further wisely this great work thus laid upon them, and respond promptly to all requests of the Woman's Board, through its secretaries at 156 Fifth Ave., N. Y., or the columns of the HOME MISSION MONTHLY, that do not conflict with the special plans of their own synodical societies which have been previously approved at headquarters in New York. Except in emergencies or regarding some special matters—as scholarships, special objects and teachers' salaries assumed locally or presbyterially in addition to the special assumed synodically—the secretaries of the Woman's Board at 156 Fifth Avenue always confer with the synodical officers, and then through the synodical corresponding secretaries send their communications on to presbyterial officers and members of Synodical Committees.

Fifth.—Each member of a Synodical Committee should subscribe for and carefully study every page of our magazine, the HOME MISSION MONTHLY, and constantly strive to secure new subscribers. Let it be the aim to place it in every Presbyterian family.

Sixth.—These Synodical Committees are not appointed by the woman's societies, presbyterial or synodical, but are annually appointed by the *synods*. By courtesy, usually, the officers of the Woman's Synodical Society are allowed to nominate the committees in many of the synods, and synod duly appoints them.

This courtesy is extended with the desire to have women appointed who will serve most efficiently and willingly, believing also that this method will most surely accomplish the object, as the officers will best know the consecrated, "willing-hearted" ones.

If any woman appointed by synod fails to serve, a place is left vacant until synod meets again.

Seventh.—The number of members of a Synodical Committee is optional. At least *three* from every presbytery should be appointed, and as many more as are deemed necessary. Some synods have five from each presbytery, others seven or eight. See to it that a number sufficiently large to form a strong society is appointed. *Do not wait* until synod convenes before selecting this committee.

Eighth.—Note the wide power of these committees appointed by the synods. They constitute, as has been already intimated, the *body* responsible for the Woman's Home Missionary work, its *head* being the Woman's Board of Home Missions in New York. These members of Synodical Committees have always voice and vote in the deliberations of the Woman's Board at its meetings in New York and annually elect its officers. These members of Synodical Committees constitute as well the synodical societies, wholly or in part, and help to form the Presbyterial Executive Committee; while in the auxiliary or local society each one is responsible for the influence exerted, be it helpful or otherwise.

Finally.—These Synodical Committees thus appointed are accountable before God for the use of this wide opportunity for service. This individual responsibility—aye, and privilege—cannot be passed on to another, or the position even be honorably retained unless one serves actively, intelligently, and prayerfully.

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